

THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN THE COUNTRY BRAND CONSOLIDATION OF ARGENTINA

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has been the starting off point facing increasing competition it has been evident in recent years between the territories (regions, cities and countries). Especially countries have adopted and implemented differentiation strategies to stimulate tourism and economic investment. Tourism has become one of the main sources of foreign exchange for the Latin American countries. This article examines the role of tourism in the process of consolidation of Argentina country brand.

KEYWORDS: Brand Identity; Country Image; Brand Country; Positioning.

INTRODUCTION

The country brand arises from the need for differentiation of territories through the identification of the characteristics of each site, creating incentives and attractive for visitors and residents (Anholt, 2010). It also aims to convey a favorable image of a place and that it is consistent with reality (Dinnie, 2008).

Advances in communications, the development of a new corporate culture characteristic of the effects of globalization and changes in business models is leading to increasingly strong phenomenon, related to the discovery of a unique identity and the countries in the business environment.

When looking at strategies to increase national exports, governments often consider options such as promoting priority sectors, promotion of investment, the role of ICT (information and communication technologies), market research and communication

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campaigns. Territorial marketing aligns with national policies, values and behaviors of citizens, education, culture, diplomacy, economy and infrastructure development.

Among all the variables that influence the positioning of the image and the consolidation of a country brand, tourism has become the mainstay of all goal oriented strategies to the capitalization of a country's reputation.

International inbound tourism is an important source of income that contributes to the economic development of a country (Ulusoy & Inancli, 2011).

The problem statement of the following article is based on how the results of the tourism sector have achieved consolidation of Argentina national brand since its creation and ongoing evolution.

DEVELOPMENT

Literature Review

In the context of globalization, the battle for tourism, exports and foreign investment is intensifying, especially with the creation and consolidation of national identity through a concept known as country brand.

The country brand is a strategy to capitalize on the reputation of a country. This strategy is measured by the results of the behavior of three variables: exports, direct investment and tourism. Especially tourism has gained importance in the process of building a national brand, because it is closely linked to economic growth and development of a country (World Tourism Organization WTO).

The concept of product brand, company and country are the same (Djurica, 2010). However, the methods of application are different. The main goal of any brand is to attract more customers, especially new customers through continuous innovation and the generation of value to their lives (Crutchfield, 2010).

The country brand is a territorial management tool, which mediates in order to unite the supply and demand for a country. The marketing applied to the country, is understood as a tool to manage its competitiveness to the extent that confirms their uniqueness and creates wealth, while the brand aims to position and will generate an identity to the country as the best option to attract those looking for places to travel, invest, live or buy.

In its basic definition a product is a physical good or service that meets a need. A country has products that in turn are composed of physical goods, services and ideas, which combined produce an experience for those who visit, whatever their purpose in doing so. The right combination of physical goods, services and the image of a country, is what makes this to achieve the needs of the markets it serves, which as discussed later, are as varied as its components.

The country brand should project the reality and identity of a country, however is subject to the image projected. Van der Horst (2010) indicates that consistency is a virtue of a national brand, in terms of offering a place and the expectations of your visitors.

The country brand is a projection given a country, which should strengthen the position and be consistent with the identity that reflects the country's image. The country brands identity refers to the specific identity of a nation, not the nation itself (Fan, 2010).

The identity of a country is represented by a set of beliefs, myths, history and culture (Gertner & Kotler, 2002). When combined identity with national brand, it is responding to two questions: What are the characteristics of a country? And how it capitalized its image in international markets? "The country's image is the representation or mental association of a particular country, regardless if they are real or fictitious attributes of the nation in question" [in Capriotti, 2008, p. 27]⁽¹⁾. The image can be transformed by the experience.

The image of a country is derived from the cognitive and affective structure of the individual. According to Villar: "The image of a country is, above all, information and communication as it is the set of ideas (rational but also emotional) we associate the same" [Villar, 2010, p. 22]⁽²⁾. The individual becomes conscious of his environment from an holistic perspective.

The formation of the country's image is by nature a subjective process and is subject to change over time. Unlike the concept of country brand that seeks to realize the subjective process experiential learning of a visitor or investor. The image is no stranger to the concept of country brand. The first depends on popular perceptions and the second is a strategy to consolidate a desired image of a country in domestic and foreign markets.

Building a country brand involves integrating efforts. It cannot be a government Policy it should be a state policy. The main objective of brand building process is to attract a large number of prospects in tourism, investment and exports. In order to attract them, it is

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essential to build a strategic brand platform in both external and internal fields that affects the decision making process of the target population.

The country brand must be a differentiating strategy beyond promoting the image of a specific place. The country brand is a cultural brand (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2010).

The characteristics of the country brand attributes should be perceived by visitors to the country, which are those individuals from the perception and subsequent experimentation, they can define their impression and understanding through words and symbols that convey their feeling. It is they who return to their places of origin, convey their feelings and lived experience of the country visited. These experiences can be landscapes, infrastructure, modern, classical, history and culture, their treatment of the citizens of the country, or companies and / or products which have marked a differential in their minds.

Tourism is a scenario of experiences that help change positively or negatively the image of a place and therefore directly affects the reputation of a country in the world.

Methodology

The research project is casuistic and exploratory type. Casuistry research can use real cases to generate discussion, learning and applicability in the classroom. Within this type of research is applied depth interviews and case method.

If methods are a source for exploratory research because studies focus on the complex organizational phenomena. Exploratory research allows a scientific approach to a problem, especially when it has not yet been addressed or adequately studied.

The methods used include studies that describe the current situation and development trying to determine changes over time. The unit of analysis is composed of Argentina's national brand.

Argentina is known for being a very strong country brand in tourism and attractions (Future Brand, 2011). The Country Brand Index (CBI) Future Brand: "has become an important tool to measure the level of success of country brand strategy, in terms of travel and tourism" [in Pipoli and Florez, 2006, p. 89]⁽³⁾.

The method of analysis was qualitative. Secondary sources are consulted documents and reports of management of organizations by country, Argentina brand. The following data sheet summarizes the methodological design used:

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Table 1. Research technique Sheet

Type of study	Exploratory and casuistic
Unit of analysis Brand country Argentina	Marca país de Argentina
Geographical	Argentina
Type of sample	Logical and theoretical displays (analytical generalization ability of the studied phenomenon), not randomly
Sample	Sample Organized by the Argentine country brand management
The collection methods evidence	Document Review (documentation and files) Direct observation
Start and End date	March 2011 to January 2012
Product derived from research projec	Strategic management and positioning of the brand image and country in America (Code 20006)

Source: Own elaboration

Findings

The marks of each country have common themes because, almost all, identify the same public but what makes them attractive to their study are differentiating factors for positioning a country. These factors are defined as unique attributes identified for each audience and that in turn are communicated in different ways under the same concept.

The images we have on a country are generally related to the way they perceive themselves as tourist destinations, places to invest or places to buy the brands preferred by customers. Tourism is the most direct link between the positive image and economic growth of a country (Stock, 2009).

In the context of globalization, the battle for tourism, exports and foreign investment has increased in the same way that they have brands and communications that promote the identity of a country.

The process of building the brand country of Argentina, emerges as a quest to achieve a positive projection abroad, as well as meeting gestate and icons interests to achieve the construction of identity Argentina.

During the government of Nestor Kirchner there was designed the Country Brand Strategy (CBS) for Argentina. The initial focus of the country brand is aimed to revive the tourism sector and homogenize national image in international markets (Official Promotion Portal for Argentina, 2008).

The strategic plan of the country brand of Argentina had different stages. The first, called The Foundation, was developed during the first half of 2004. It was to the Country Brand Strategy priority as state policy, unchanging character. According to the Final Report of the Tourism Sector "inbound tourism in 2004 accounted for 1.6% of GDP (up from 1.4%

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in 2002 and 1% average of the past decade)" [at Institute of Technology and Industrial Development Services IDITS, 2006, p. 34]⁽⁴⁾. Argentina, of which 52% chose the country for three reasons: leisure, recreation and holidays (National Institute of Tourism Promotion INPROTUR, 2008).

In 2004 3.4 million tourists entered to Argentina, 52% chose the country for three reasons, leisure, recreation and holidays (National Institute for Tourist Promotion, INPROTUR 2008).

The 64% of tourists came into the country from neighboring countries (Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay), 7% from the United States and Canada, 17% from Europe and 12% from the world (National Institute of Tourism INPROTUR, 2008).

The second stage was implemented during 2004 and 2006, called Consensus and Design of the Country Brand Strategy. Right now defined programmatic and sectoral bases about the technical equipment for the design of a national brand. In 2005 there was created the National Institute of Tourism (INPROTUR) as an independent organization under a joint management model (public and private) in order to gather resources to enable the country to encourage travel and tourism industry growth. INPROTUR mission aims to promote Argentina as a travel and tourism destination worldwide.

The third, occurring during the years 2006 and 2008, known as the Institutionalization. Public and private institutions assume the management of the country brand. For 2006, there entered a total of 4.1 million international tourists, of which 60% come from neighboring countries (Ministry of Tourism of the Nation, 2006).

Chile, United States, Brazil, Italy and Spain became the main countries of origin of the largest number of tourists who entered Argentina in 2007 (National Institute of Statistics and Census INDEC, 2011). However, tourist arrivals from Canada increased by 28.7% compared to 2006, placing this country as a major source of tourism revenue for Argentines (National Institute of Statistics and Census INDEC, 2011).

Argentina began to be a recognized national brand in 2007 in the rates of global positioning, placing it at #10 country brands with growth potential in terms of gastronomy and tourist destination and offers (FutureBrand, 2007).

Between 2008 and 2009 ran the fourth stage, called Growth and Consolidation of the Argentina Brand. A Quality Management Program was established, in order to improve

Argentina competitively supply and support all institutions, companies, professionals and entrepreneurs representing regional brands, provincial, municipal or private.

With the global economic crisis, tourism in Argentina showed a sharp drop between 2008 and 2009. "Inbound tourism meant for the country in 2008, the arrival of 4.6 million tourists who generated income of \$ 4.5 million" [at National University of San Martin, 2009, p. 6]⁽⁶⁾.

Argentina presented a complex economic situation in 2009, it went from being a country with rapid growth to have a slow evolution in the economy (De Luca & Malamud, 2010). This situation affected the country's image by placing it as a nation in recession. However, further linked in attracting tourists allowed Mercosur countries bound as a way to share promotional costs. Two main themes were proposed for Argentina out of its crisis. Firstly, we need to improve the Argentine domestic market dynamism. And in the second instance, Argentina had to demonstrate that it was a competitive nation (Lenardón, 2010).

In 2009, Argentina was ranked #6 Ranking of country brand in the Americas to be considered a strong brand in the region (Future Brand, 2009). That same year, Argentina was ranked #7 in the category of easy entry and exit from the country, ranked #4 as a culinary destination and ranked #10 nightlife that offers visitors according to the World Ranking Country Brand Index . Different were the results of the positioning of the image of Argentina as Ranking Anholt-GFK Roper Nation Brand (Anholt).

Argentina ranked first in 2009 for his performance in the tourism sector very different to 2008 which ranked #24 (Enrile, 2011).

The presidents of Argentina and Russia signed bilateral agreements in 2009, which favored outbound tourism growing by 255% in the period 2000-2008 (Piacentini, 2011). As a result of this agreement, the Argentines and Russians do not need a visa to travel to their countries. The arrival of Russian tourists to Ezeiza and Aeroparque Jorge Newbery in 2008 were more than 4,000, while in 2009 there were more than 5,000, an increase of over 25% (Ministry of Tourism of the Nation, 2008).

The Argentine government hired in 2009 the international agency Bell Pottinger in the UK, with the aim of improving its image in Europe and the United States in terms of projecting Argentina as a business center and tourist destination. In 2001 Argentina overcame a financial crisis, which showed that as a country it could have a significant role in the global context (Mattison, 2009).

From 2010 began the fifth stage called Relaunching. The purpose of the relaunching is based on creating an image of strong, differentiated and competitive internationally Argentina (National Institute of Tourism INPROTUR, 2012). The renewed concept of country brand included a slogan Argentina beats with you, in order to generate a direct link to the traveler (Gallo, 2011).

In 2010 was a decisive year for Argentina. Kirchner's government created the Ministry of Tourism in accordance with Decree 919/2010 in order to encourage the tourism industry by the favorable results presented since 2003. The new ministry was originated on the former Ministry of Industry and Tourism, whose role was to define and implement policies relating to the industry and trade of Argentina (Presidency of Argentina, 2010).

The tourism sector showed positive growth in Argentina consolidating in an attractive tourist destination for the countries of the region during 2010. It was the effect of a series of promotional activities undertaken by the private and public sectors during the global economic crisis.

In 2010 there were more than 6,000 Russian tourist arrivals, with a growth of 20% (Ministry of Tourism of Argentina, 2010). The Iguazu Falls and the Calafate Park Hotel were the most popular tourist destinations for Russian tourists.

Argentina recorded a segmented micro tourism. New market niches emerged in order to streamline the tourist attractions in all regions of the country. These niches are organized in the following categories: a) Authentic, aimed at the promotion of cultural tourism, b) Active, focused on promoting adventure tourism, c) Natural, focused on birdwatching, d) Gourmet, focused in promoting regional cuisine e) High-end, luxury tourism oriented. These categories apply to each of the six regions (Ministry of Tourism of the Nation, 2010).

Medical tourism potential consolidated growth scenario for Argentina in 2010. The latter offer was attractive to the stranger an opportunity to combine a complex medical procedures cost. The total foreign patients increased by 10% in 2011, this revenue generating U.S. \$ 80 million (Argentina Tourism Observatory, 2012).

In 2009, about 15,000 Chinese tourists visited Argentina and the first half of 2010, showed an increase of 25% in terms of revenue stream compared to the same period in 2009. Argentina's culture and scenery are attractions for Chinese tourists (national brand Portal Argentina, 2010).

Tourism has become a key objective not only to economies, but also for the promotion of a country or region. Argentina is no exception, for 2011, after seven years of building one's brand country, the results are summarized in a record in tourism. Revenue from tourism grew 4.2%, generating \$ 3.5 million (National Institute of Statistics and Census INDEC, Measuring country branding done in 2011 and 2012 by Future Brand and Nation Brand Index Argentina located at different places depending on their attributes in terms of country image. Argentina was ranked 32 in the world and generally ranks third in the ranking of Latin America, 2011 and 2012 (Future Brand, 2011; Future Brand, 2012).

Table 2. Country Brand Index Ranking Latin America 2011-2012

Rank# América Ranking	Country	Rank # General Ranking 2011-2012
1	Costa Rica	24
2	Brazil	31
3	Argentina	32
4	Chile	34
5	Peru	44

Source: Compiled from Future Brand (2012)

The Argentine country brand as a future challenge is to maintain the tradition as a source of tourist attraction. The tradition has an important place in the past and future of Argentina. This tradition seeks to be recovered through a national ideal based on respect for diversity (Soria, 2010).

According to the Federal Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism 2016, we expect a gradual improvement of promotional efforts year by year (National Institute of Tourism INPROTUR, 2010). The main goal of the plan, ensure that Argentina is placed at the top of the mind of international destinations. Purpose being achieved, since Argentina is the second most popular tourist destination in South America, after Brazil (National Institute of Tourism INPROTUR, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Argentina is a country that has understood the importance of developing its country brand to enhance its competitiveness and image globally and has worked in recent years

towards strengthening it. But recently it has become a place of tourist convenience for a wide range of tourist attractions.

The experience and perception of tourist proportionally affect the positioning of the brand country of Argentina. This is evident with the results obtained since 2004 in terms of foreign exchange, even in the midst of the economic downturn that occurred between 2008 and 2009.

Tourism then becomes the third largest source of foreign currency for Argentina, followed by agriculture and mining. There must be a synergy between brand and country and tourism.

Developing a brand strategy and possible consolidation country depends on specialization rather than overcrowding. Argentina has achieved recognition based on differentiation. The brand country of Argentina, shows a significant integration and connection of all those aspects that identify what Argentina culture characterized, expressing a place with its own identity.

Tourism revenues have direct and indirect effects on economic growth of a country. In the case of Argentina, the diversification of tourism and inbound tourism behavior have become a competitive advantage for the consolidation of its country brand in international.

Public and private efforts have failed to locate tourism in Argentina as a sector with exponential growth. Argentina is among the top 10 most attractive tourist destinations worldwide. Its ease of access and its high level of investment in infrastructure have generated a positive effect on tourism for the past eight years.

It is expected that the promotional INPROTUR action increase inflows on tourists from China and Russia to Argentina. This will help increase tourism demand and perpetuate a positive image of Argentina in international markets, especially in two countries with economic potential.

This example of a country brand consolidation creates a learning lesson for other countries, especially to Latin America, because we conclude that the main productive activity that generates rapid economic growth is tourism.

Tourism is able to reduce the gap between perception and reality on a destination and thus contributes to the brand building process country. Understanding the value of national brand helps countries improve their attributes on all three fronts: tourism, exports and foreign investment.

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